



VII. LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The hillsides are the most sensitive areas in Los Gatos. Potential problems of erosion, landslides, mudslides, fire and water use are a major concerns. Likewise, the visibility of hillside development from the valley floor is a very important issue. The General Plan recognizes these factors and includes numerous goals and policies that address the planting of new vegetation. A landscape plan should address fire safety and sustainability, provide privacy, maintain existing vegetation and minimize the need for grading. Conflicts between these objectives will need to be addressed on a case by case basis (also see Chapter III section D).



Refer to
the Town's
Landscape
Policy

A. Landscape design concepts.

The Town has adopted landscape policies to address the issues of hazardous conditions and visibility of development in hillside areas. These policies (published separately) shall be implemented in all projects as they may relate to hillside development.

The predominant theme of the landscaping plan shall be one that maintains the natural appearance of the hillsides. The following design standards and guidelines are meant to implement that theme.



Standards:

1. The natural appearance of the hillsides shall be maintained.
2. Design for fire safety. Landscape design shall incorporate fire safety design strategies such as defensible space (also see Chapter II section C, Selecting the building site and Chapter V section D, Design for fire safety).
 - Space shrubs and trees so that they do not form a means of transmitting fire from native growth or other vegetation to structure(s) on the site.
 - Limit use of plants that develop deciduous or shaggy bark.
 - Limit use of plants that develop dry or dead undergrowth
 - Limit vegetation immediately adjacent to structures, especially under eaves, overhangs, decks, etc.
 - Irrigation shall be provided to ornamentals within 30 feet of the primary residence and to establish newly planted natives.

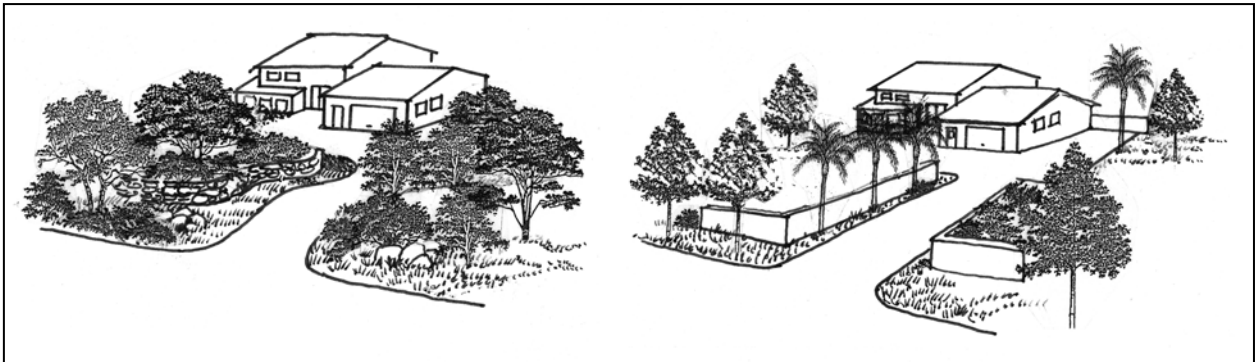
A minimum vertical clearance of 13.5 feet shall be maintained over fire access roads and driveways.

3. In landscaped areas the majority of the planting shall be native plant species indigenous to the immediate area. Large areas of formal landscaping are prohibited.
4. Formal gardens and turf areas shall be limited to locations immediately adjacent to the house such as entry ways or small gardens at the rear (see planting zones, page 26).
5. Irrigation shall be designed to conserve water and to protect existing native vegetation. Plants with like water needs should be grouped together.
6. Plant selection shall recognize the importance of water conservation, fire resistance, and erosion control with emphases on drought tolerant and native plant species. Refer to Appendix A for a list of recommended plants that address these concerns.
7. Plant species located further than 30 feet from the primary residence shall be indigenous and appropriate for the immediate natural habitat (see Appendix A).
8. Fences, driveways and other impervious surfaces, retaining walls and outdoor lighting are discussed in Chapter VI.



Guidelines:

1. Landscaping materials should be arranged in random, informal groupings to blend with the character of the surrounding natural hillsides and adjacent properties. Create a simple rather than elaborate landscape solution and integrate existing vegetation into the landscape design.



Do this

Don't do this

2. Landscaping should be used to control exposure to summer sun and winter winds (also see Chapter V section H).
3. Landscaping should be used to address specific conditions on the site (e.g., controlling erosion, screening buildings, providing privacy, creating shade and maintaining solar access).
4. The use of impervious surfaces should be minimal. Walkways may be constructed of decomposed granite, pavers set in sand, or similar techniques.
5. Landscaping adjacent to street rights-of-way, driveway entrances, or trails should be avoided when it might restrict sight distance or interfere with already established native plants.
6. Trees and highly flammable vegetation should be planted 30 feet away from the home.

Refer to
NPDES
requirements



B. Plant materials.

Refer to
SCVWD
Prohibited
Plant List

Standards:

1. Emphasis shall be placed on selecting native species that are adapted to the climate and soil characteristics of the site (see Appendix A).
2. Ornamental landscaping such as exotic, nonindigenous, nonnaturalized plant materials are strongly discouraged. However, if used, ornamental landscaping shall not be located more than 30 feet (Zone 1) from the primary residence. These plants should be adaptable to the Los Gatos climate so that minimal or no irrigation is required after an initial establishment period of one to three years.
3. Non-native trees or other plants that could spread, become noxious weeds, or dramatically alter the character of the hillsides shall not be introduced. This applies to weedy aggressive species such as Eucalyptus, ivies, (Hedera species), periwinkle (Vinca major and minor), cape weed (Arctotheca calendula), pampas grass (Cortaderia selloana), ice plant, etc.
4. Turf grasses and high water using plants are prohibited outside zone 1 (within 30 feet of the house).

Guidelines:

1. Plant materials should be selected for their tolerance to drought, their water conserving characteristics, their resistance to fire, and their ability to prevent erosion.
2. Plant material should be adaptable to the climate and soil conditions of the site (habitat appropriate).
3. Trees and shrubs should be selected from the Town's approved list provided in Appendix A.
4. Trees and shrubs from the Town' approved list should be the predominant plant materials used adjacent to the street and most visible to the public.
5. Native shrubs are preferred for large slope plantings over ornamental ground covers due to their low water requirements and their ability to withstand drought conditions better.

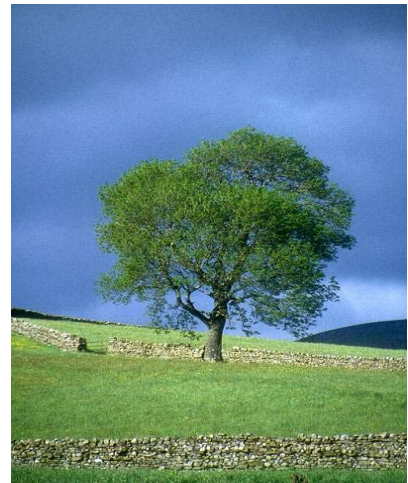


D. Tree preservation.

Refer to the
Town's Tree
Preservation
Ordinance

Standards:

1. Existing trees shall be preserved and protected in compliance with the Town of Los Gatos Zoning Regulations and any additional tree protection specifications adopted by the Town.
2. When a tree may be impacted by a proposed development, information on the size, condition, actual dripline, elevation of natural ground at the trunk, species, and variety of tree shall be submitted with the plans. Standards in the Tree Preservation Ordinance shall be followed.
3. If a tree is proposed for removal, or if the Town determines that a tree may not survive construction, information on the visual impact of the removal as well as the impact on adjoining trees shall be submitted with plans.
4. Pruning shall consistent with the current edition of Best Management Practices, Tree Pruning, established by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).



Guidelines:

1. There should be no construction or grading of any kind within the dripline of an existing tree unless appropriate mitigation measures are approved by the Town and are properly implemented. Grading outside the drip line is considered a potential impact when it occurs upslope from trees.
2. Pruning of existing trees should be limited as much as possible. Focus should be placed on trees that are dead, diseased or dying, and removal of hazardous branches.
3. Minimal pruning may be allowed for construction clearance, but shall be within the threshold established in the Tree Preservation Ordinance.
4. A general contractor may remove branches up to three inches in diameter in emergency situations, or for clearance requirements that were not anticipated at the preliminary clearance pruning of trees. However, the branch removal may not substantially change the character of the tree. In such cases, the contractor may remove the branch, leaving approximately an 18-inch long stub on the tree. This stub shall then be correctly removed by an approved tree service.